

WORKERS WORLD

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Aug. 6, 2009

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50¢

ON A NATIONAL LEVEL

Gates arrest exposes police racial profiling

By Phebe Eckfeldt
Cambridge, Mass.

The arrest of Henry Louis Gates Jr.—a prominent African-American Harvard University professor—in his own home by Cambridge police on July 16 has shone a brilliant national and international spotlight on racial profiling in the U.S.

Professor Gates is the director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Research at Harvard, the first African American to receive the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowship, and a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation “genius” award. Sometimes called the nation’s most famous Black scholar, he has received numerous honorary degrees and awards for his teaching, research and development of academic institutions that study black culture.

Professor Gates was returning to his home near Harvard Square after a trip to China on July 16. He found his front door jammed and with the help of his limo driver was able to force the door open. According to the white female who called 911 about the “break-in,” the Cambridge police asked her repeatedly if the men were Black and then if they were “Hispanic.”

Charles J. Ogletree Jr., a Black Harvard law professor who is representing Gates, told the press that when a Cambridge police officer arrived at his home and asked for proof that he lived there, Professor Gates showed him both his Harvard University ID and his driver’s license. Gates requested the police officer’s badge and number. (National Post, July 21)

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GATES IS RIGHT

Editorial 10

“I said, ‘Who are you? I want your name and badge number.’ I got angry,” Gates told the Post. Gates reported that the officer refused to show his badge and walked out of the house. When Gates followed him, he was “astonished” to see more police on his porch. Ogletree said that when Gates stepped onto the porch, Sergeant James Crowley placed him under arrest and handcuffed him.

The police report claims that Gates was “abusive” and “unruly.” They say race had nothing to do with the arrest. Crowley has been with the Cambridge Police Department for 11 years, and ironically instructs recruits at the Lowell Police Academy on how to avoid racial profiling.

Gates said of his arrest, “There are one million Black men in jail in this country, and last Thursday I was one of them. This is outrageous, and this is how poor Black men across the country are treated everyday in the criminal justice system. It’s one thing to write about it, but altogether another to experience it.” (Washington Post, July 22)

Gates’ arrest and racial profiling have caused a firestorm of reaction. Many believe he was arrested because he stood up to the police and became justifiably angry instead of being silent. Crowley told the media, “The professor at any time could have resolved the issue by quieting down and/or going back inside his home.” (Washington Post, July 24)

Ogletree stated that he has received emails from all over the country from people telling of their experiences with racial profiling. Gates plans to do a documentary on racial profiling.

Not an isolated incident

The most famous reaction to Gates’ arrest was that of President Barack Obama. At a press conference on health care reform on July 22, Obama was asked to comment on it: “Now, I don’t know, not having been there and not seeing all the facts, what role race played. ... But I think it’s fair to say, number one, any of us would be pretty angry; number two, that the Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home; and number three, what I think we know separate and apart from this incident is that there’s a long history in this country of African Americans and Latinos being stopped by law enforcement disproportionately. That’s just a fact.”

The reaction was swift and strong to Obama’s statement, with the racist right-wing, big-business media and police unions and organizations across the country screaming that Obama had

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PHOTO: CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

BLACK FIREFIGHTERS

Win against FDNY

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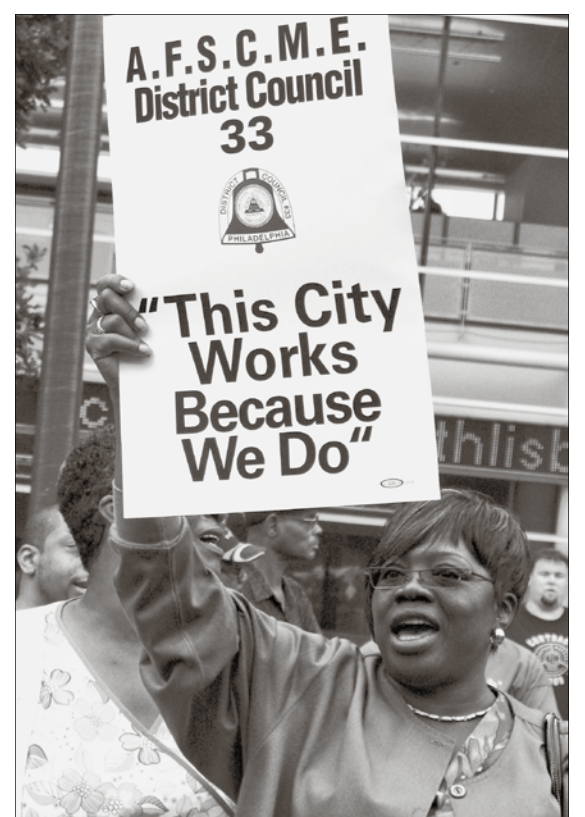


WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

EYEWITNESS GAZA

Devastation, resistance

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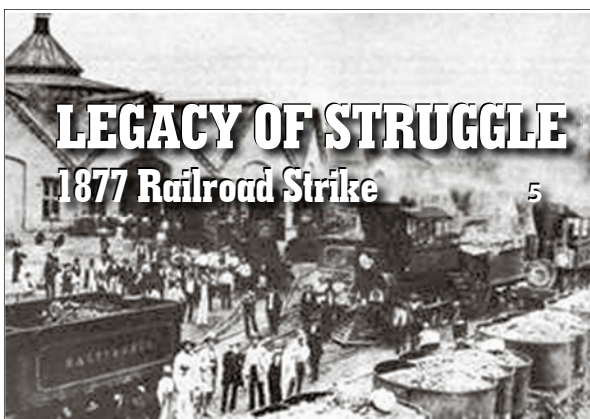


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PHILLY CITY WORKERS

Fight cutbacks

5



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1877 Railroad Strike

5

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NEW YORK

Black firefighters claim victory against biased test

By Greg Butterfield
New York

Just a month after the U.S. Supreme Court struck a racist blow against civil rights in a New Haven, Conn., firefighters' case, Black and Latina/o firefighters and candidates won an important victory in New York City. Federal Judge Nicholas G. Garaufis ruled July 22 that two versions of a written hiring exam used by the Fire Department of New York unfairly excluded more than 1,000 candidates of color.

The decision came in a class-action lawsuit brought by the Vulcan Society, a Black firefighters' organization, and three candidates who were excluded based on the tests. The court found that the city's "reliance on these examinations constitutes employment discrimination in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1984."

Attorney Darius Charney of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which represents the Vulcans, called the ruling "a tremendous victory that we've been fighting toward for over seven years."

New York has the most unrepresentative fire department of any major U.S. city. Just 3.4 percent of the 11,000 firefighters here are Black, and only 6.7 percent are Latina/o, in a city where people of color make up more than half of the population. In contrast, people of color make up 40 percent of firefighters in Boston, 51 percent in Philadelphia and 57 percent in Los Angeles.

In April, attorneys from CCR, Levy Ratner and Scott & Scott asked Judge Garaufis to grant summary judgment, eliminating the need for a trial. With his July 22 decision, Garaufis agreed that there was overwhelming evidence of racial bias.

"When an employment test is not adequately related to the job for which it tests—and when the test adversely affects minority groups—we may not fall back on the notion that better test-takers make better employees," Garaufis wrote.

Since filing suit in 2002, the Vulcans have continued to mobilize, rallying community and activist support for subsequent court hearings and news conferences. The case garnered broad community support because, as Vulcan past president Paul Washington said, "Racial discrimination is still alive and well in our city's institutions."

Billionaire mayor defends test

In its June decision Ricci v. DeStafano, the U.S. Supreme Court sided with 22 white firefighters and one Latino firefighter in New Haven who claimed that dropping a written exam for job promotions constituted "reverse discrimination."

After this attack on civil rights, New York's billionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg again publicly championed the FDNY exam, confident that the department could continue its discrimination unimpeded.

But he was wrong. Judge Garaufis' decision is a major



PHOTO: CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

Vulcan Society news conference at City Hall, July 23. From left: Vulcan past President Paul Washington; Alison Roh Park, Center for Constitutional Rights; current Vulcan President John Coombs; Darius Charney, CCR attorney.

embarrassment for the mayor, who has continued the reactionary policies of his predecessor, Rudy Giuliani, under a smokescreen of being more even-handed and "businesslike."

Bloomberg and Fire Commissioner Nick Scoppetta jumped to the defense of the latest revision of the test, enacted last year. The Vulcan Society has called for abolishing the written test altogether.

As Vulcan Society President John Coombs said in a July 16 Daily News op-ed, "While Scoppetta says that on the most recent exam, 33 percent of the top 4,000 test-passers were minorities, Black and Latino candidates tend to be bunched at the bottom of that list. Since the FDNY is currently doing no hiring at all, it is very likely that these candidates will never be hired, or that they will wait on the list for three or four years, unlike their white counterparts."

Writing in the July 27 New York Daily News, columnist Errol Louis notes, "Many credible institutions tried, with zero success, to convince Bloomberg and Scoppetta that the fire exam needed a reworking. The City's own Equal Employment Practices Commission, an independent watchdog, presented City Hall with a long account of nearly a decade's worth of complaints about the fire test and a plea to re-examine it. They were ignored."

Errol observes, "According to court documents, a researcher with the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (who isn't a fireman) interviewed six firefighters about what might make a good employee, then had 10 more add ideas. These were then converted into exam questions—but there was no objective, research-based inquiry into whether the final questions screened for or predicted actual job performance."

"One member of the DCAS panel testified under oath that he 'probably didn't know' what inductive reasoning, one of the test areas, even meant. Others were unsure of the meaning of 'problem sensitivity,' 'visualization,' 'time sharing' and other skills the test is supposed to measure."

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Gates' arrest:

Part of Boston's racism, then & now

By Frank Neisser
Boston

The July 16 arrest of Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. in his own home in Cambridge, Mass., is but the latest glaring incident in the long history of racism permeating Boston, going back to the 1970s desegregation battles and before.

From the end of Black Reconstruction following the Civil War until the 1970s, there was never a single African American on either the Boston City Council or Boston School Committee.

These all-white committees ran a segregated, separate and unequal school system in Boston up through 1974, 20 years after the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* declared segregation unconstitutional.

Black parents had to go to federal court to obtain an order in 1974 mandating racial

balance through busing to gain equal access to educational resources in Boston. That same year Boston became famous worldwide as a focus of racism. A right-wing white supremacist movement called "Restore our Alienated Rights," led and organized by Boston City Councilors like Louise Day Hicks directly out of Boston City Hall, organized racist marches.

Buses carrying African-American children to schools in South Boston and other white neighborhoods were stoned. A picture was flashed round the world of a Haitian man being dragged off a porch in South Boston by a racist mob. Another picture showed African-American attorney Theodore Landsmark



Henry Louis Gates Jr.

suffering a broken nose as he was assaulted with a U.S. flag by racists on Boston City Hall Plaza.

In 1974 progressive forces mobilized from all over the country to answer the racist forces. A 25,000-strong national march against racism took place in Boston on Dec. 14. Busloads of antiracists came from all over the country, including the Deep South. It was the largest civil rights demonstration to take place since the 1963 March on Washington, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The 1974 march put a halt to the racist mobilization, encouraging the people of Boston to come out against racism.

In subsequent years, antiracist forces

defended African-American homes from racist attacks. African Americans, Latinas/os and Asians have gained representation on the Boston City Council. But racists, championed by Mayor Thomas M. Menino, have continued to try to return to "neighborhood" unequal schools and eliminate school transportation.

After forming the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, community, labor and progressive forces beat back the attack again this year. The school committee was forced not to take action on a plan that would have drastically cut school transportation and limited access of the Black and Latina/o communities to quality educational opportunities. But the fight will continue in the fall, and racist right-wing forces will only be emboldened by the attack on Professor Gates and the right-wing chorus supporting this latest racist police conduct. □

Gates arrest exposes police racial profiling

Continued from page 1

called them "stupid."

Obama's reaction to this was, "I have to say I am surprised by the controversy surrounding my statement, because I think it was a pretty straightforward commentary that you probably don't need to handcuff a guy, a middle-aged man who uses a cane, who's in his own home." (ABC News, July 23)



Henry Louis Gates Jr., handcuffed and arrested in his home.

boarding school outside of Boston. Patrick called the arrest "every Black man's nightmare." He said, "You ought to be able to raise your voice in your own house without risk of arrest." (Boston Herald, July 24)

On July 21 the charge of disorderly conduct was dropped against Professor Gates. He has demanded that Crowley apologize to him. Crowley has refused. In fact, in an arrogant show of force the Cambridge Police Department held a press conference on July 24 demanding that both Obama and Patrick apologize to them!

Cambridge, Harvard University and Boston are seen around the world as bastions of liberalism, hotbeds of progressive ideas and prestigious places from which cutting-edge research emanates. But the racial profiling and arrest of Professor Gates have re-raised the question of how much has changed since the 1970s when, in the wake of court-ordered busing for desegregation, white racist mobs were stoning buses carrying Black school children and attacking Black people on the streets and in their homes.

The location of Professor Gates' home in Harvard Square—a rich, mainly white area—recalls the period in Boston where Black people could not go into certain areas of the city without literally fearing for their lives.

As a result of a jury trial in 2008, the City of Cambridge was forced to pay a multi-million-dollar award to a former

city worker, Malvina Monteiro, who accused city officials of racial discrimination. Attorney Ellen Zucker, who represented Monteiro, told the July 24 Boston Globe, when referring to Cambridge, "The patina of progressive values that cover the city too often hides discrimination and retaliation." Monteiro is Cape Verdean.

Theodore Landsmark, a young African-American attorney whose nose was broken when he was attacked in the middle of Boston's City Hall plaza in 1976 by racist white youth with a U.S. flag on a pole, told the July 24 Boston Globe that three years ago in Boston he was pulled over in his new Mercedes by police who said they were checking to see that he owned the car.

Eckfeldt is a member of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, AFSCME Local 3650.

Black firefighters

Continued from page 2

Impact on school testing

Bloomberg and his Wall Street cronies are also worried about the impact the Vulcan decision may have on their regime of standardized testing in the city's public schools. Bloomberg is currently negotiating with the New York State legislature to retain his mayoral dictatorship over the schools.

This policy, which discourages real education for the mostly people of color and poor youths in city schools and rewards faculty who "teach to the test," is a cornerstone of Bloomberg's current re-election campaign. Bloomberg wants to avoid a wide discussion of the well-documented bias of these tests against students of color, as well as the need for community control and getting police out of the schools.

It is unclear what effect the Supreme Court's Ricci decision may have on the New York ruling. Negotiations between the Vulcans and city officials are likely to continue. Judge Garaufis will issue his recommendations in the fall. But the struggle to eliminate the biased testing process will continue.

"The mayor always defends this test by saying we need to select the best firefighters," said CCR attorney Shayana Kadidal. "But you absolutely can't use a paper-and-pencil test to measure who will have courage in a fire or who will work well in a team, or any of the other characteristics that make good firefighters." □

Detroit protest denounces utility shutoffs after family dies

Protesters from throughout southeastern Michigan and beyond, including Lansing, converged on the brand-new multimillion-dollar DTE Energy building in downtown Detroit July 24 to demand justice for the Reed-Owens family and an immediate moratorium on utility shutoffs.

Four members of this African-American family died of carbon monoxide poisoning July 16 while using a gas-powered generator in their home when the billion-dollar corporation shut off their electricity. The company had been notified that the family had filed for bankruptcy and violated their own rules by shutting off the electricity.

Demonstrators also demanded that Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm declare an immediate state of emergency because Michigan has the highest unemployment rate in the United States and epidemic levels of foreclosures, evictions, utility shutoffs and plant closings.

Representatives of Moratorium NOW!

Coalition, sponsors of the protest, met with DTE officials July 23 to press their demands, but were rejected outright by the corporate bosses. At the meeting DTE officials admitted to the high crimes of cutting off the gas and electricity of 130,000 homes annually throughout the



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

state of Michigan and putting at risk hundreds of thousands of poor and working people, in particular children, those with health challenges and the elderly. DTE has \$24.6 billion in assets. In 2008 it had \$9.3 billion in revenue and a net income of \$546 million.

— Bryan G. Pfeifer

Flawed plan, right-wing attacks threaten health reform

By David Hoskins

Newspaper headlines, radio talk show hosts and cable news commentators have all spent the better part of the last month warning the Obama administration of a possible repeat of the 1993 failed Clinton health care proposal. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid bolstered this sentiment when he announced that the Senate would not vote on the bill before the August recess as President Obama had initially requested.

Indeed, many of the key ingredients of the 1993 health care debacle appear to be in play once again. Democrats have advanced a complicated bill that falls far short of universal coverage. Intraparty squabbling, this time between the Democratic leadership and its right-wing “Blue Dog” faction, has hindered attempts to bring the bill to a full vote in Congress. Big insurance companies, the Republican Party, and the corporate media have all lined up to defeat any public option to cover the uninsured.

Democratic health plan critically flawed

One Senate and two House committees have passed a health reform plan. The Senate Finance Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee have yet to vote on the measure. The Finance Committee’s refusal to take up the measure has prevented the bill from reaching the full Senate floor before the August break.

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman publicly threatened to circumvent his own committee and bring the bill before the full House over the objections of Blue Dog Democrats who have threatened to kill the bill in committee.

A big part of the problem in obtaining meaningful health reform is that the Democratic plan, even if it ultimately passes, fails to provide the real reform

workers need and deserve. The plan is complex, and politicians on both sides of the debate have admitted that even they fail to fully understand it.

The details that have emerged indicate a plan full of giveaways to the pharmaceutical and health insurance industries with little guarantee of quality coverage for those who need it.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the plan would establish a mandate to purchase health insurance, expand Medicaid eligibility, regulate private policies, set up insurance exchanges to provide subsidies to certain individuals and families, and offer a “public plan” option through those exchanges. The CBO estimates that it would take seven years to reduce the number of uninsured individuals to 17 million.

Even that estimate may be overly optimistic. The plan reinforces the problems of the existing system. The main difference is that the proposed plan finally delivers the insurance companies what they really want—a captive market—by placing the burden of health insurance on the individual with a mandate to purchase it. Physicians for a National Health Program points out that the plan does not limit how much insurers can charge for premiums, deductibles, or co-pays.

The public option so widely touted by the plan’s supporters is expected to affect just 10 percent of the population. Those covered by an employer-sponsored plan are prohibited from accessing the public option. After it is established, the so-called public option will receive no government funding.

In time, the public plan is likely to be pushed out of the market altogether as private insurers cherry pick young healthy patients. Sick and older patients would be forced into the public plan, driving up costs disproportionately and making the plan unsustainable over time.

As if that were not enough, the version that passed the Senate health panel insulates biotech companies from generic competition for 12 years after their drugs go to market. This would ensure an extraordinary price tag for the groundbreaking biologic drugs used to fight life-threatening diseases such as cancer.

Right wing refuses any reform

The right wing has united to defeat the Democratic plan, even with all its shortcomings and windfalls for pharmaceutical and private insurance companies. The reasoning behind this intransigence is simple. Corporate health profiteers and their conservative ideologues fear any sort of competition with a public insurance system, regardless of how miniscule the public option is or how uneven the playing field.

Minnesota Rep. Michelle Bachman, a rabid rightwing Republican, recently said as much on the House floor in July 20 comments picked up by C-SPAN. Bachman stated: “Approximately 114 million Americans are expected to leave private health insurance. Why? Their employers will drop the insurance because the taxpayer-subsidized plan will be 30 to 40 percent cheaper. This action will collapse the private health insurance market, and then the Federal Government will own the health provider game.”

Bachman’s claims are not substantiated by the evidence. Neither the CBO nor the reform plan’s most ardent sponsors expect anywhere near 114 million people to flock to the severely restricted public option. However, the comments reveal that the right wing is fully aware of the inefficiency and inequities inherent in the private insurance system. This awareness has fueled the attempt to block even minor health reform at all costs. □

California budget crisis hits students, education workers

By David Hoskins

The economic crisis in California spells hardship at the state’s public universities as budgets are balanced through a combination of tuition hikes and pay cuts for faculty and other workers.

The California State University system recently raised student fees by 20 percent after the Board of Trustees voted 17-1 to approve the increase. CSU officials ignored hundreds of student demonstrators who came out to protest the fee increase.

CSU is the largest four-year university system in the country, and the fee hike will impact an estimated 450,000 students. CSU took the additional step of reducing enrollment by 40,000 students to further cut costs.

The California Faculty Association and California State Employees Union have approved separate agreements to furlough their members two days a month in response to pressure from university officials. The agreements affect approximately 39,000 CSU faculty and classified workers. By a wide margin, the faculty union voted no confidence in Chancellor Charles B. Reed’s leadership of CSU.

The fee increases, reduced enrollment and furloughs have not prevented CSU from planning hundreds of layoffs, a reduction of course offerings, and the elimination of entire academic programs.

CSU has a reputation as one of the most affordable university systems in the country. The system is sometimes referred to as the “People’s University” due to the large number of students who are poor, working class and people of color. The recent cuts amount to an attack on the right to quality higher education in California.

The University of California has not escaped the wrath of California’s economic crisis and misplaced budget priorities of state elected officials. UC recently announced that it expects to see an \$813 million reduction in support from the state general fund.

As a result the UC Board of Regents voted to institute severe funding cuts on its 10 campuses and force 108,000 employees to take between 11 and 26 furlough days this year. The furloughs amount to a salary cut of up to 10 percent for affected workers.

Most UC campuses have already placed a hiring freeze on half of planned

faculty hires. The system has seen 724 staff layoffs, with more expected. Freshman enrollment was earlier cut by 2,300 students, and a fee increase of 9 percent is in place for the fall semester. UC President Mark G. Yudoff has warned students to expect an additional fee increase in the winter.

The community college and K-12 system is also hit hard with double-digit cuts. The K-12 budget, which includes community colleges, lost \$6.1 billion in funding. The community college system expects \$936 million of that to come out of its budget.

The attacks on public higher education hit full throttle after Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Democratic legislative leaders reached a deal to reduce funding for California’s university systems by 20 percent in an attempt to close the state’s \$26 billion budget gap.

The extreme budget cuts mean that fewer students will have the opportunity to obtain a higher education in California. Those who are admitted into an institution of higher learning will be forced to pay more and attend longer in exchange for lower quality of education. □

On The

BART workers vote to strike

The two major Bay Area Rapid Transit unions—Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1555 and Service Employees International Union Local 1021—and one other, with a total of 2,800 workers, voted to strike the week of July 13. Negotiations continued over the July 25-26 weekend, with July 30 set as the final contract date.

Management has offered a four-year contract with \$100 million in cuts that would force the workers to bear the brunt of the economic crisis: no raises for three years, unpaid days off and a hike in benefit contributions. The unions have offered a counterproposal that will save \$60 million in the first two years of a two-year contract and \$760 million over 25 years. The savings comes from postponing lifetime medical benefits for both workers and management from five to 15 years.

CBS5.com reported July 24 that management does not plan to impose a contract if an agreement isn’t reached by July 30, four months after contract talks began, though several sources report such threats. Don’t make the workers pay!

CWA Midwest agreement with AT&T

Nearly 20,000 members of Communications Workers of America District 4 in the Midwest reached a tentative three-year agreement with AT&T on July 15. The agreement includes pay and pension increases in each contract year, including cost of living adjustments, but an increase in some out-of-pocket costs for health care. However, the District 4 bargaining committee notes that “new company-funded health care initiatives and wage increases will result in overall improvement in members’ standard of living by thousands of dollars each year.” In addition, workers will have new transfer opportunities and other employment security gains.

Now the fight continues in other CWA districts whose contracts also expired on April 4 and whose members also voted to strike, including AT&T East, Southwest, West, Legacy T and other AT&T units, as well as AT&T Southeast, where bargaining started July 20. The billion-dollar corporation needs to ante up generous contracts for all its workers!

Midwest teaching staff win rights

More than 23,000 teaching staff at the University of Wisconsin will soon be able to negotiate union contracts, reports the Wisconsin branch of the American Federation of Teachers. On June 29 Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle signed the state’s biennial budget, which included a provision extending bargaining rights to UW faculty, academic staff and research assistants.

This victory ends a 40-year campaign by UW academic workers for the right to join a union. Also on June 29, about 430 instructors and adjunct faculty at Western Michigan University voted to be represented by the Professional Instructors Organization, an AFT affiliate. No wonder they voted union; many WMU instructors have not received a raise in 12 years!

SF Labor Council shows international solidarity

The San Francisco Labor Council expressed international solidarity on July 13 when it voted for two resolutions. One supports House

Picketline

By Sue Davis

bill 2404 that requires that “not later than Dec. 31, 2009, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to Congress a report outlining the U.S. exit strategy for U.S. military forces in Afghanistan” and calls on all California congresspeople and all Bay Area labor councils “to push for an imminent, rapid withdrawal of all U.S. troops and bases from Afghanistan.”

The second resolution “denounces the illegal military coup d’etat against duly elected president of Honduras Manuel Zelaya and calls for restoration of the legitimate government headed by Mr. Zelaya” and supports a foreign policy that avoids “adverse harm to our sisters and brothers in Latin America.” □

Philly city workers march

More than 300 members from four major unions, joined by supporters from around the city, marched on July 21 through the Old City District of Philadelphia to Constitution Center, where a conference of state legislators were meeting. The protesters’ main message was painted on a white banner in green and black lettering: “Don’t cut the budget on the backs of public employees!” Participating unions included Transport Workers Local 234, which has been without a contract since March; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Councils 33 and 47, which have been without contracts since June; and Service Employees Local 32BJ, which has suffered salary cuts.

—Report and photo by Joe Piette



Protest at Goldman Sachs defends Stella D’Oro workers

By Sara Catalinotto
New York

As we go to press, an email from the Stella D’Oro support committee reports that Lance Inc. has withdrawn its offer to buy the company.

Solidarity got the workers at the Stella D’oro bakery in the Bronx, N.Y., through a 325-day strike to protect and maintain their contract. Solidarity is still needed as these mainly immigrant workers face other maneuvers by the bosses to break their union and deny their right to their jobs.

Brynwood Partners, Stella D’Oro’s current owner, is said to be negotiating with North Carolina-based Lance Inc. for the sale of the Stella D’Oro brand name—but not the factory. If such a sale goes through, 135 union jobs will be lost.

Members and supporters of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers Local 50 are trying various



WW PHOTO: SARA CATALINOTTO

tactics, including a petition to the National Labor Relations Board judge requesting an injunction (see WW, July 30) and rallies targeting Lance’s investors, who can call off the sale or demand that the factory stay put.

A rally on July 22 at bailed-out investment firm Goldman Sachs brought out a diverse sampling of class-conscious New Yorkers on a hot workday afternoon. Among these were a delegation of ap-

prentice electricians and their teacher from International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3. One woman told Workers World, “This was announced in our class and we came right down.” From 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m., up to 70 protestors chanted “Justice for the Stella D’Oro workers” and “What’s disgusting? Union busting!” Another rally was announced for July 28 at 11 a.m. at Barclays Bank headquarters.

The next day, instead of covering the rally, the New York Daily News carried excerpts from a press statement put out by Brynwood’s public relations firm, which tries to blame the union itself for the workers’ troubles. A part of the statement that was not quoted reads: “The Union’s pay scale at Stella D’Oro is completely out of sync with the Bronx community and today’s economic reality. Total wage costs being paid by Stella D’oro to its Union workers were and still are far higher than competitive labor costs of businesses in the surrounding area.” In other words, “If everyone around you is broke because of racist super-exploitation, then you should be broke too.”

Given this situation, many are learning that even though Stella D’Oro workers have invested years into making quality cookies, the capitalists want to pay crumbs. The struggle continues, and must grow. Please check www.bctgm.org and www.stelladorostrike2008.com for updates. □

How workers fought back in 1877

By Stephen Millies

The first great upsurge of the U.S. working class erupted in 1877. Hundreds of thousands of workers revolted against pay cuts in the fourth year of an economic depression. One out of four workers was unemployed.

Pittsburgh was the scene of the greatest battle on July 21, 1877. Thousands of workers there fought the militia—now called the National Guard—and drove them out of town.

This legacy of struggle inspires organizers of the “Global Week of Solidarity with the Unemployed” that will be held in Pittsburgh from September 19-26 during the G-20 Summit.

Railroads were the country’s largest industry in the 1870s. The world’s biggest corporation was the Pennsylvania Railroad, whose tracks eventually stretched from New York City to Chicago and St. Louis.

Railroad work was dangerous. Companies were slow to install safety devices like air brakes and automatic couplers. In Massachusetts alone an average of 42 railroaders were killed on the job every year during the mid-1870s.

Workers’ compensation benefits didn’t exist. Pennsylvania Railroad rules stipulated that workers’ pay “covers all risk and liability.” That miserable pay was often \$30 a month. Some railroad workers weren’t paid at all. In fact, the labor of enslaved African people built 9,000 miles of railroads in the South before the Civil War.

“Slavery by Another Name” by Douglas

A. Blackmon relates that Black prisoners built many of the Southern railroads after the Civil War. They included John Henry, who was worked to death.

Irish and other European immigrants built railroads in the North. Mexican workers laid tracks in the Southwest. Chinese workers built the first transcontinental railroad across the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

While railroaders and their families went hungry, dynasties like the Vanderbilts made huge fortunes. Railroad stocks dominated the New York Stock Exchange. Compared to Jay Gould, who bankrupted the Erie Railroad, Bernie Madoff is a minor thief.

Pay cuts provoke resistance

The failure of Jay Cooke’s bank in Philadelphia led to the panic of 1873. Cooke went bankrupt financing the Northern Pacific while General Custer died killing Native people who were in the way of the railroad line.

A six-year long depression followed. Average pay dropped by one-third. Homeless people, called “tramps,” including many youth, wandered the countryside.

The six-month long strike in 1875 of Irish immigrant miners in Northeastern Pennsylvania’s anthracite coal fields was smashed. Afterwards union supporters, labeled “Molly Maguires,” were framed-up, and 21 were executed.

Franklin B. Gowen, Reading Railroad president, and the biggest mine operator, was the prosecutor who sent these mar-

tyrs to the gallows.

Pennsylvania’s wealthy now want to execute Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was framed on evidence as flimsy as that which convicted the Molly Maguires.

After years of pay cuts, workers fought back. Coopers at John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil refinery in Cleveland went on strike in April 1877 when their pay was reduced to 56 cents per day.

After the Baltimore and Ohio railroad imposed another wage cut on July 16, 1877, railroaders blockaded the line in Martinsville, W.Va. Soon the strike extended to Baltimore. The railroad’s boss, John Garrett, had the state militia shoot down workers. On July 20, 11 were killed in Baltimore and another 40 were wounded.

The next day was the Pennsylvania Railroad’s turn. Workers virtually took possession of Pittsburgh on July 21. The company’s president, Tom Scott, said that strikers should be put on a “rifle diet.” National Guard troops killed at least 26 women, children and men—13 in Reading and several in Philadelphia.

Scott brokered the rotten deal that put Rutherford Hayes in the White House. The 1876 presidential election was contested for months, with racist Samuel Tilden claiming the most votes. Ku Klux Klan terrorism kept hundreds of thousands of African Americans from voting for Hayes.

Hayes betrayed Black people by agreeing to pull federal troops from the South, thereby ending Reconstruction. African

Americans were thrown back for generations. Part of the deal was supposed to include subsidies for Scott’s Texas and Pacific Railroad project.

Black workers and communists

The railroad strike leapt forward to Chicago and St. Louis. Toledo, Ohio, workers staged a general strike. Santa Fe Railroad workers shut down all the packing houses in Kansas City, Mo.

Black dock workers in St. Louis got the support of white workers. African Americans in Galveston, Texas, established a minimum wage of \$2 per day. Construction projects in Louisville were shut down by Black workers.

In several cities the Workingman’s Party of the United States, the country’s first Marxist party, took the lead. In Cincinnati, WPUS leader Peter H. Clark, an African-American high school principal and an associate of Frederick Douglass, addressed strikers.

Communists were blamed for these strikes which occurred just six years after the Paris Commune—a pioneering attempt at working-class rule—was crushed. Jay Gould’s New York World newspaper carried the headline “Pittsburgh Sacked: Entire City in the Power of the Devilish Spirit of Communism.”

It was the federal troops sent by President Hayes that finally crushed the railroad strikes. But in many cases the bosses had to rescind the wage cuts.

Source: “1877: Year of Violence,” by Robert V. Bruce

Raul Castro visits Africa as Legacy of Cuba-Africa solidarity continues

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

In a visit to four African states, Cuban President Raul Castro continued the decades-long legacy of international solidarity with the peoples of the continent. Castro, who recently stepped down as chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement at its summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, was hailed at the gathering in July for Cuba's contributions to the liberation and development of Africa.

Even the pro-Western government of Egypt voiced its gratitude and recognition of the Cuban state for its sterling efforts during its leadership of the 118-member organization that represents developing countries largely from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Granma International reported that the Egyptian foreign minister, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, praised Cuba's commitment to the defense of the organization's principles and political interests of its membership. "Our aspiration is that Cuba will continue with those efforts in the context of its role as a member of the NAM troika," Gheit said. (Granma International, July 14) Egypt will take over the leadership of NAM for the next three years.

After leaving Egypt, President Castro visited the state of Algeria for high-level talks with that government. Algeria and Cuba both have a history of armed struggle against colonialism and international solidarity with fraternal national liberation struggles in Africa.

Cuba, which became a genuinely independent state after the triumph of the revolution in 1959, preceded Algeria, which won its liberation in 1962 from France after a seven-year armed struggle against French imperialism from 1954 to 1961. Algeria lost more than a million of its people during the liberation war and has since assisted other independence movements in southern Africa, as well as providing an international headquarters for the Black Panther Party during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Cuba and the liberation of southern Africa

President Castro also traveled to the southern African nation of Namibia during his tour of the continent. Namibia, which won its national independence in 1990 after a 13-year armed and mass struggle against the racist apartheid settler regime formerly based in South Africa, fought alongside the Cuban internationalist forces in Angola between 1975 and 1988.

The South-West African Peoples Organization, the liberation movement in Namibia that is now the ruling party controlling the state, has been a close ally of Cuba since its formation in 1959. The revolutionary government of Cuba provided military and political training to SWAPO cadres for many years, and it was this alliance between SWAPO, Cuba, the African National Congress of South Africa and the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) that defeated the racist apartheid military forces that occupied southern Angola for many years.

Cuba provided 250,000 of its own troops to fight for the total liberation of Angola and Namibia between 1975 and 1988. In 1975 MPLA leader and Angola's first president Agostino Neto invited the Cuban military to assist in defeating an invasion of the southern region of the country by the racist South African Defense Forces, who entered Angola to prop up the reactionary UNITA bandits who sought to maintain the country under imperialist influence even after it became an independent government.

In early 1976 SADF was routed and UNITA was contained to limited areas inside the country. However, the U.S.-supported racist apartheid regime continued to invade and occupy areas in Angola, requiring the ongoing presence of the Cuban internationalists for many years. After the disastrous defeat of the SADF by the joint military forces of Angola, Cuba, SWAPO and the ANC in 1987-88, the conditions were created for a negotiated settlement leading to the withdrawal of SADF forces from Angola

and the realization of the independence of Namibia.

With independence in Namibia, the apartheid regime in South Africa realized that it had no choice but to relinquish power. The release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners in South Africa in early 1990 resulted in negotiations that brought about the demise of apartheid and the ascendancy of the ANC to power, where they have remained over the last 15 years.

Legacy of solidarity continues

President Castro made a two-day official state visit to Namibia on July 19-20. He was hailed for Cuba's contribution to the fight against settler-colonialism and imperialism in the region. Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba condemned the U.S. for its continuing economic blockade of Cuba.

At a state banquet honoring Castro, President Pohamba encouraged the international community to denounce the sanctions against Cuba, pointing out that these measures are hampering the development of the Caribbean island-nation. Pohamba also called for the release of the Cuban Five, who are being held by the U.S. for their efforts to prevent further terrorist attacks on the people of the island. (Cuban News Agency, July 20)

"The people of Cuba have weathered many storms and challenges despite externally imposed hardships," said Pohamba. He praised Cuba for showing solidarity by welcoming thousands of exiled Namibians to study in Cuban educational institutions during the liberation struggle.

"These Namibians are today making tremendous contributions to our nation building and the development of our society. The sacrifice and commitment of the Cuban internationalist forces in Africa to help their brothers and sisters in their just cause for freedom and sovereignty will always be remembered by the present and future generations," Pohamba declared.

During his visit, Castro also held discussions with former Namibian president and SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma. In ad-

dition, he toured Heroes' Acre, where a wreath was laid in honor of the freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for the independence of the country.

Prior to leaving Namibia, the two governments issued a joint statement pledging continued cooperation and solidarity.

The joint Cuban-Namibian communiqué states: "Both presidents confirmed with pleasure the excellent state of bilateral relations between the two countries. At the same time, they reaffirmed their full commitment to establish and expand economic and commercial links to the benefit of both countries and expressed their satisfaction at the positive progress of cooperation between Cuba and Namibia, particularly in the fields of health and education." (Granma International, July 20)

About the international situation, the communiqué states that "both presidents agreed, moreover, to undertake joint efforts to contribute to the construction of a world of peace, justice and solidarity and to further increase mutual aid and cooperation in multinational forums, in particular via the United Nations, the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, within the framework of South-South cooperation."

After leaving Namibia, President Castro traveled to neighboring Angola, where he had a working visit with President Jose Eduardo dos Santos. Both countries signed an accord for greater cooperation in the telecommunications field.

The Angolan Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology Jose Rocha said, "We are aware of the large developments in the research fields carried out by that Latin American country, mainly in the computing domain." (Granma International, July 21)

Minister Rocha added that the two governments are planning to "share experience and outline a program that permits the training of Angolan personnel, with a view to meeting the problems in the area. Angola and Cuba last February 2009 in Luanda signed four legal accords aimed at strengthening and widening bilateral cooperation in the areas of Geology, Mining, Industry and Education." □

NYC celebrates anniversary of attack on Moncada Barracks in Cuba

By Dee Knight
New York

A spirited celebration of Fidel Castro's legendary July 26 attack on the Moncada Barracks, which launched Cuba's revolutionary movement, took place July 25 at Service Employees Local 1199 headquarters. A broad cross-section of New York's Cuba solidarity movement took part in the celebration.

There was strong support for the five anti-terrorist Cubans who continue to languish in U.S. prisons: Fernando González in Terre Haute, Ind.; René González in Marianna, Fla.; Antonio Guerrero in Florence, Colo.; Gerardo Hernández in Adelante, Calif.; and Ramón Labañino in Pine Knot, Ky. A huge, beautiful banner of the Cuban Five graced the stage.

Attorney Leonard Weinglass gave an update on legal aspects of the campaign to free the Five. He expressed "severe disappointment" that the U.S. Supreme Court earlier this month refused to review the case. "We obviously believe that the Supreme Court should have considered the serious flaws in the case and should have

reversed the convictions of the Five. But efforts on behalf of the Five have not concluded; indeed they haven't slowed down."

"There are several efforts underway now," Weinglass added. The legal team is following up on a recent victory regarding the outrageously lengthy sentences imposed on three of the five and is preparing

for a resentencing hearing sometime this year. The legal team is also preparing an appeal, pressing the point that the convictions are entirely invalid. One of the principal arguments will be the absurdity of the conviction of Hernández for conspiracy to commit murder.

Weinglass also mentioned that the

changed politico-diplomatic situation favors the Five. He said their case has been raised with U.S. diplomats by other governments. There have also been unified Latin American demands to end the blockade against Cuba at talks in Trinidad and San Pedro Sula this year.

Secretary of State Clinton's pressing Cuba on the issue of political prisoners amounts to sheer hypocrisy in light of the horrible treatment of the Five and of other U.S. political prisoners like Mumia Abu-Jamal. Details on each of the Five are available at www.antiterroristas.cu, www.freethefive.org, www.ny-freethefive.org and www.cubasolidarity.com.

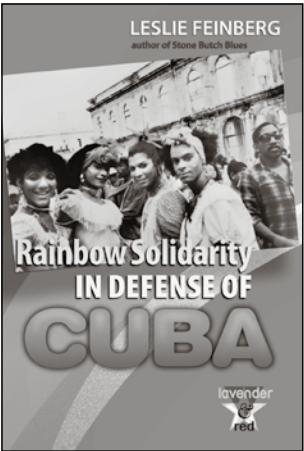
The solidarity movement with Cuba has developed a range of activities and a wide variety of organizational forms over 50 years of struggle. Two were given special recognition: IFCO/Pastors for Peace, led by the Rev. Lucius Walker, and the Venceremos Brigade. Both were strongly represented in Havana at the massive July 26 celebration

Continued on page 10

Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA

This new book is a compilation of 25 articles about how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love from the colonial and imperial eras. The articles are part of the Lavender & Red series from Workers World weekly newspaper. The never-before-compiled information offers a factual vista on the trajectory of progress of the Cuban Revolution. It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

Order from www.Leftbooks.com



Hondurans stand firm against illegitimate government

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Manuel Zelaya Rosales, the legitimate president of Honduras, crossed the Nicaraguan border to enter his homeland July 24 after declaring the second round of mediation arbitrated by U.S.-handpicked Costa Rican President Oscar Arias to be a failure.

Once inside Honduran territory, Zelaya tried to talk with the Armed Forces chief, with no success. He then had to get back to the Nicaraguan side because of the presence of 400 heavily armed troops, including sharpshooters, poised to take action against him and the unarmed masses of people who had come from all over the country to greet him.

In response, the Popular National Front of Resistance against the Coup D'État (FNPRG), which has been organizing strikes and other popular actions since the June 28 coup, remains firm in their demands for the unconditional return of Zelaya to office and for convening a Constitutional Assembly.

Zelaya had accepted Arias' original seven-point "proposal for peace." The coup regime led by Roberto Micheletti, who has been aided by United States advisors close to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, rejected that plan and made a counter-proposal.

As a result, Arias amended the initial plan and on July 22 produced a nine-point proposal where President Zelaya's return to office—the first point in the original proposal—was relegated to number six. This was a clear concession to the golpistas (coup plotters), who refuse to accept Zelaya's return. It amounted to turning the president over to the repressive power of the golpistas.

Zelaya refused to accept it, instead vowing to return to Honduras from Nicaragua. The president initiated a trek to the Nicaraguan-Honduran border accompanied by Venezuelan Exterior Minister Nicolas Maduro, Honduran Exterior Minister Patricia Rodas and other supporters.

Resistance energized despite repression

Those resisting the coup inside Honduras have been carrying out constant actions for three weeks—strikes, demonstrations and other protests. After learning that their President was coming home, the Honduran people, under FNPRG leadership, reinitiated a general strike on July 23 with renewed energy and started mobilizing marches toward the border with Nicaragua.

This was no easy task. The illegal coup regime has militarized the country. Soon after they were aware of Zelaya's plans, the golpistas sent hundreds of police and heavily armed army troops to the border, meanwhile declaring a continuous curfew in the border area. Troops stopped buses and cars that were carrying demonstrators, and when the people continued by foot, the army formed tight lines surrounding them, allowing the people to neither go through nor return.

The people were trying to reach El Paraiso, one of the three entry points to Honduras from the Nicaraguan side. Zelaya first headed toward El Paraiso, but the heavy militarized presence prevented his entry there. He then moved to the next nearest entry, Las Manos, where he eventually was able to enter for a few minutes before the troops, threatening slaughter, forced him back to Nicaragua.



A letter from Honduras

According to Dick Emanuelsson's July 27 report on the "Honduras en Resistencia" e-mail list, a reporter from Nicaragua called him to say that between 4,000 and 5,000 Hondurans had crossed to Nicaragua in the region around Las Manos to be with Zelaya.

A letter from Martha Silva in Honduras to a friend in Venezuela, circulated through the Internet, shows the resilience and courage of the people, but also the terrible repression they face. One of the thousands defying the curfew and army repression, Silva tried to go to meet Zelaya.

Silva wrote: "I walked from Arenal to El Paraiso to meet Mel [Zelaya] for more than 50 kilometers, under the sun, rain, mud, hunger, thirst, etc. When we were about only 11 kilometers [7 miles] away, the police stopped us and took us to jail." [The repressive forces are arresting scores of people, with the only charge that of defying the curfew; in general, they are freed after a few hours, in an obvious attempt to discourage people from continuing.—BJC]

"Once free, I joined the picket line in El Paraiso. Throughout all Friday [July 24], they were beating us and throwing tear gas until 11 a.m. when they started shooting and hurt two compañeros. We spent the rest of the day between screams and tear gas. Goriletti [In Latin America, the golpistas are called gorillas, so Michel-etti's name has been turned into Goril-etti by the resistance.—BJC] started curfew at 12 noon, so these gorillas forced the stores to close and prohibited anyone from selling us food or water or to assist us in any way. Some people, though, in secret would sell things to us.

"Then [the army] surrounded us with battalions and we decided to make their lives impossible, so we set tires on fire, formed barricades with sticks and stones. We had sort of a carnival with music until the rain put out the fire. We had more than 50 trucks parked with perishable produce where we stayed as if it were a hotel, although the food would rot after three days.

"Well, the night was advancing and I was finishing my shift, so I tried to sleep around 10 p.m. At 6 a.m., we found out that one of the youth was dead, he was 24 years old, and they said that the police killed him. When I saw him, I felt a chill through my body. He was one of the youth with whom we were setting the tires on fire.

"Then later we were told by the forensic team that he had been savagely tortured, stabbed 42 times. His name was Pedro Magdiel Nuñez Salvador. ... Those of us

who survived the 1980s know that the same thing happened then ... as a message to the leftist forces, we know those were the methods of the doctrine of national security of assassin Billy Joya and now history is repeating. So even though I am very tired, I wanted to share this testimony."

Joya, a retired captain of the Honduran army, is an advisor to Micheletti on national security. He was in charge of the murderous U.S.-directed "Cobra" commandos in the 1980s and member of the CIA-created 316th Battalion that tortured, disappeared and murdered scores of Hondurans during that time.

State of emergency at Nicaraguan border

The constant curfew and repression have created a zone where criminal human rights abuses are conducted continually against the resistance forces. Several delegations of human rights organizations have been documenting the coup regime's consistent abuses since the June 28 coup.

The latest report, dated July 27, focuses specifically on the abuses committed since July 24. It states that since then there is a "very tense situation in Las Manos," the military and police have established approximately 18 roadblocks, hundreds of demonstrators have been arrested, and at least 2,000 people are trapped between these roadblocks, unable to move or receive food, medicines or basic services. The military has not allowed any humanitarian aid to enter the area. (rebellion.org)

There have been multiple other violations against freedom of expression, constant harassment and threats against reporters, at least six murders—among them the killing of two leaders of the leftist Democratic Unification Party—and death threats to almost every leader in the resistance.

On July 26, prior to the funeral of Pedro Magdiel, while the leadership of the resistance was meeting in El Paraiso to plan for the upcoming week, they heard an explosion. A bomb had been thrown at the building. Fortunately no one was hurt.

Washington's actions against Honduran people

Ever since Zelaya increased the minimum wage and joined the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA)—the number one enemy of United States-based transnational corporations—both Honduran businesses and the multiple U.S. corporations operating in Honduras have turned sharply against Zelaya. From

Exxon Mobil to the maquiladoras (assembly plants), the owners are afraid to see their profits slip away and go instead to benefit the mostly poor population.

So, just as United Fruit of the 1950s (now Chiquita Brands) did, these corporations took action in coordination with the pro-U.S. Honduran oligarchy. Now they work not only with the Pentagon and related organizations, but with the apparently "softer" face of "pro-democracy" imperialist entities like the National Endowment for Democracy, U.S. Agency for International Development and an orchestrated international campaign conducted in the U.S.-based corporate media. This even included an opinion piece by Micheletti attempting to justify the coup in the July 27 Wall Street Journal.

In an excellent investigative report published in the July 8 edition of the Cuban daily Granma, Eva Golinger writes, "Republican Senator John McCain is behind a visit to Washington by representatives of the de facto Honduran government. McCain, known for his hard-line stance against Venezuela, Bolivia and other countries in the region considered to be 'anti-imperialist,' organized a 'press conference' for the coup leaders on Tuesday, July 7, at the prestigious National Press Club in the U.S. capital."

Golinger continues: "McCain is chief of the executive board of the International Republican Institute (IRI), an entity considered to be the international arm of the Republican Party in the United States and one of the four 'key groups' of the NED. In the last year, the IRI has been working in Honduras with more than \$1.2 million in NED funds to influence political parties and 'support initiatives to implement political positions during the 2009 campaigns. The IRI is to place special emphasis on Honduras, a country that has presidential and legislative elections in November 2009.'"

One of the recipients of the aid was the COHEP, the Honduran Council of Private Enterprises, which is behind the coup in opposition to the increase in minimum wage and the possibilities of any anti-privatization attempts by Zelaya.

Uncertain future

What will happen now in Honduras? Although Micheletti has rejected the possibility of Zelaya returning to office, a piece in the July 26 New York Times clearly states that the "Military in Honduras backs plan on Zelaya." The Times reports, "The communiqué [announcing the military's decision] was drafted in Washington after days of talks between mid-level Honduran officers and American Congressional aides. Posted on the Honduran Armed Forces Web site, it endorsed the so-called San José Accord that was forged in Costa Rica." This includes Zelaya's return to office.

The popular pro-Zelaya demonstrations in Honduras have reached out to the rank-and-file soldiers and the lower-ranking officers, calling on them to join the people, not to repress them. Perhaps U.S. strategists fear these calls will be successful and that Micheletti's intransigence will lead to a split in the military that would join the popular revolt. This may be why Washington could work with elements in the Honduran army for concessions that would restore a constitutional government, albeit a weakened one. This remains to be seen.

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Forum to discuss Iran’s election and U.S. strategy

By Workers World New York bureau

They stood together to make their announcements like a traditional soft-cop, hard-cop duo. U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned the Iranian government that if they didn’t abandon their nuclear plans, the U.S. would withdraw its offer for talks. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said Israel was against any negotiations with Iran and would not take a bombing strike against Iran off the table. Their news conference on July 27 in occupied Jerusalem was a reminder that the debate in the U.S. anti-war movement over how to relate to the Iran issue is far from academic. Whatever the political orientation of those inside Iran protesting against the current government, the im-

perialists’ orientation is clear: to weaken and, if possible, bring down the current Iranian government, with the goal of eliminating Iranian sovereignty in the long run. With the intention of countering this goal, the Stop War on Iran coalition, in alliance with the International Action Center and other anti-war organizations that work to bring understanding about developments in Iran to the U.S. public, has organized a forum for Aug. 1 at 4 p.m. at the Solidarity Center in New York. That’s at 55 West 17th St. in Manhattan. Participants in Saturday’s forum will include Ardeshir Ommani, co-founder of the American-Iranian Friendship Committee; Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center; John

Catalinotto, International Action Center; Phil Wilayto, Campaign Against Sanctions & Military Intervention in Iran; Manijeh Saba, an Iranian human rights and women’s rights activist; and Dustin Langley, a Navy veteran and organizer with the Stop War on Iran campaign. Catalinotto is also a managing editor of Workers World newspaper. The idea for the forum grew out of a debate at an anti-war conference in Pittsburgh in early July. Some of the participants at the conference argued for supporting coordinated actions July 25 that publicly supported the Iranian opposition to the election victory of Mahmoud Ahmadi-najad as Iran’s president. Those organizing the SWOI forum, on the other hand, argued that to partici-

pate in those actions would give aid and comfort to the imperialist designs to reverse Iran’s 1979 revolution and turn that country of 73 million people back into a client state, as it was under the shah. For the sake of clarity in the movement, the forum’s organizers said they intend to hold an in-depth discussion to take up U.S. plans for the Middle East region, imperialism’s strategy toward the Iranian revolution, the role of the corporate media in misleading both the general public and the progressive movement, and the internal political and class struggle in Iran. For more information see stopwaroniran.com, call 212-633-6646, or look at workers.org for recent WW coverage of Iran.

More occupation troops die as U.S. escalates Afghan war

By John Catalinotto

The casualties among the U.S.-led occupation forces in Afghanistan are headed toward a new high this year, reaching 67 killed in July alone. The step-up in deaths—mostly from the large U.S. and British contingents on an offensive in Helmand Province—signals the new U.S. administration’s focus on this Central Asian country of just 29 million people. Whether the pretext-of-the-day for the Afghan occupation is the “war on terror,” “spreading democracy” or “defending women’s rights,” this is an occupation by Western imperialist powers of an oppressed, impoverished country. It is causing enormous suffering and death among the Afghan people, whose villages are routinely attacked by U.S. fighter jets and pilotless drones. And according to Afghan women’s groups, they are worse off now than before the invasion. That the Taliban has a program which

in many aspects may be reactionary doesn’t negate the legitimacy of the Afghan resistance to an imperialist takeover of their country. Some government spokespeople and media are already worrying that the higher casualties “could erode U.S. public support for a war that is already among the longest in U.S. history.” (Washington Post, July 21) Their worry indicates the opportunity to mobilize mass opposition to the war within the U.S., as occurred with the Iraq war. Some 90,000 foreign troops now occupy Afghanistan: 57,000 from the U.S., with another 11,000 due by the end of 2009; some 9,100 from Britain, and contingents of a few thousand each from the other major NATO countries: Germany, France, Italy and Canada. Smaller contingents have been sent by the smaller European imperialist powers such as Netherlands and Spain, as well as 2,000 troops from Poland. A few hundred more have been

sent by even smaller European states and by each of the countries that were considered part of the socialist camp before the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The NATO powers risk the lives of their youths to assure their capitalists a place at the table of imperialist plunder of the world. The others do it to be allowed to pick a few crumbs that fall from the table. U.S. Marines report tough fighting Despite the overwhelming firepower of the U.S.-British-NATO forces, escalating the occupation of Afghanistan will be no easy job. U.S. Marines, who are Iraq veterans, say the Afghan resisters are even tougher and bolder than the Iraq fighters were. This is true even though the Afghans are less well-armed. Marine Sgt. Jacob Tambunga, a squad leader in Company C, First Battalion, Fifth Marines was part of the U.S. occupation of Iraq in battles with the Iraqi resistance in Anbar Province. His reaction af-

ter fighting the Afghan resistance during three ambushes in the Helmand Province offensive is that the Afghans were tougher and more tenacious. Each battle lasted at least as long as the longest in Iraq. “They are two totally different worlds,” said Sergeant Tambunga. “In Iraq, they’d hit you and run,” he said. “But these guys stick around and maneuver on you.” (New York Times, July 26) “It was straight luck that we didn’t have a lot more guys hit,” said Sgt. Brandon Tritle, also a squad leader in Company C. Tritle compared the resistance fighters’ tactics to that of the Marines. “One force will put enough fire down so you have to keep your heads down, then another force will maneuver around to your side to try to kill you,” he said. “That’s the same thing we do.” (New York Times, July 26) What he didn’t mention is that the Afghans, while poorly armed, are fighting inside their own country to repel an invading military force and therefore are highly motivated. The Marines said that the Afghan fighters were not as heavily armed as the Iraqis, but that they were able to make use of many roadside bombs made from fertilizer to kill and wound the occupation troops. Such bombs were responsible for the deaths of nearly all the British troops who died in Helmand in July. One Marine told the Times: “If they had better weapons, then we’d be in real trouble.” E-mail: jcat@workers.org

Event demands U.S. sign peace treaty with Korea

By Eric Struch New York

On July 27, 1953, U.S. imperialism and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or north Korea) signed an armistice agreement that halted the Korean War. Fifty-six years later, not only does the U.S. still refuse to sign a peace treaty, but it still occupies south Korea with 28,500 troops, stationed there to prop up a puppet government. On July 25 Nodutdol for Korean Community Development, a grassroots organization based in Queens, N.Y., co-sponsored a candlelight vigil with the National Campaign to End the Korean War to shed light on the urgent need for the U.S. to sign a peace treaty with the DPRK that would bring the war to an official end. The meeting, “Unlearn War: Proliferate Peace—Peace Treaty to End the Korean War,” held at the Solidarity Center in Manhattan, was part of a coordinated national effort from July 24 through 27. Similar meetings were held in Honolulu, Los Angeles, Oakland, Calif., and Washington, D.C. The New York meeting included a talk by Christine Ahn, co-founder of Korean Americans for Fair Trade, a performance

by Brown Rice Family, a Pungmul band (traditional Korean drumming), and showing of the films “Still Present Past” and “Street Outreach.” Thomas Kennedy of Vets for Peace spoke about his experiences as a Marine in the Korean War. Taiyo Na, a New York-born emcee and songwriter, also performed. A closing talk was given by the Rev. Meeil Lee. The U.S. military occupation of south Korea and Washington’s continued refusal to sign a peace treaty are the two main obstacles to peace and the reunification of the Korean nation. Both the DPRK and the Republic of Korea (RoK) in the south have reunification ministries. The leadership of the DPRK has, for decades, had plans on the table for a unified, co-federal republic and has shown its willingness to negotiate many times. The popular mood in the RoK has been for reunification—about a quarter of the population is separated from family members in the DPRK. The state of war is the main justification the U.S. uses for maintaining and expanding its more than 100 military bases in the south. It is the reason given by the RoK government for its yearly allocation of \$26 billion for the military. It is clear that now is the time for the U.S. to sign a peace treaty to end the longest war in history.

For more information about the national Candle Light Vigil, see www.endthekoreanwar.org and check out its new online exhibit at <http://stillpresentpasts.org>. For more information on Nodutdol, see www.nodutdol.org. □



A CALL TO JOIN THE NATIONAL

MARCH FOR J.O.B.S

PITTSBURGH • SEPT • 20

March so that the unemployed, the homeless, the hungry & poor are no longer. . .

INVISIBLE OR SILENT

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Before the G-20 Summit

- **MARCH FOR JOBS**
- **TENT CITY on the Hill Sept. 19-25**
- **CARAVANS to Pittsburgh**

Support the global week of solidarity with the unemployed

Viva Palestina convoy sees destruction and courage

By Sharon Eolis
Rafah, Gaza

We got in. We were in one of the last buses to arrive at the Gaza border in Rafah toward night in mid-July when Palestinian students greeted us and rode with us to Gaza City.

This victory had seemed unlikely. The Egyptian regime—in obvious collusion with the U.S. to try to break the back of our movement—confronted the Viva Palestina-U.S. convoy, the largest U.S. delegation ever to challenge the Israeli blockade of Gaza, with obstacle after obstacle. After days of negotiations, we won a 24-hour visit.

British Minister of Parliament George Galloway, New York City Councilmember Charles Barron and former U.S. Congressperson Cynthia McKinney led the convoy. McKinney had recently been released from an Israeli jail. The Israelis had kidnapped her off a ship bringing building supplies to heroic Gaza.

The convoy aimed to get into Gaza, whose resistance last December-January added another chapter to the Palestinian people's 60-year struggle for liberation. We were to deliver vital medical supplies, to bring in vehicles the Gaza residents could use mainly for medical purposes, and, finally, to spread the word back in the U.S. about the situation in Gaza.

We soon entered Gaza City where a Palestinian delegation greeted us. They had waited all day and into the evening for all 218 Viva Palestina-U.S. members to arrive. We felt like we were entering free territory, where people were so warm and friendly to their guests and so glad to meet delegation members.

Blockade and war's devastation

The next morning we took a guided bus tour and witnessed Gaza's devastation. It was clear the Israeli bombing and invasion of Gaza were a deliberate campaign to inflict punishment on the civilian population.

Apartment buildings had been shelled, leaving huge holes in the walls. Many homes in Gaza had been reduced to rubble.

Overall, 5,000 homes were destroyed and 20,000 made unlivable, leaving 50,000 Gaza Palestinians without shelter. The Israelis also bombed government buildings; the Parliament, the Cabinet Building and the Presidential Compound had all been bombed.

There were gaping holes in the roofs and whole floors had been destroyed. One of the buildings had sheets of concrete hanging off it. In other places there were stacks of broken concrete and twisted metal.

We passed an area known as Gaza's factory row. Before the bombing and invasion, more than 200 factories produced cement, biscuits, wooden furniture and much else. Some distance from the factory area were remnants of colorful carts from a demolished ice cream factory.

The Israeli attack destroyed all the main factories and the agricultural centers. We could see the damage to orchards and olive groves that had been bulldozed. As the bus approached the Mediterranean Sea, we saw part of the beach refugee camp of Gaza City, where some folks were living in tents while others were out in the open cooking food over fires under the hot sun.



Photo of destruction in Gaza taken by a member of the Viva Palestina delegation.

WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

Damage to infrastructure

What was harder to see was the damage to the water and power infrastructure. The ongoing blockade directed at the elected Hamas government had reduced fuel entry to Gaza, which meant that power was cut to a few hours per day, stalling the water pumping system. After the December-January invasion, some 80 percent of the electrical system was out of service, disrupting service for major wells providing water access to 200,000 people.

Sewage has been a major problem in Gaza because of an inadequate pumping system and shortage of fuel, generators and spare parts. We passed areas where the stench of raw sewage was overwhelming. Our guide said that raw, untreated sewage is pumped directly into the sea.

Palestinian technicians said returning water and power services to the 400,000 people without them could take only weeks, but could be done only if the Israelis allowed parts and equipment to enter Gaza. Israel has refused to allow any of the needed equipment across the checkpoint.

Like the 1990s' U.S. blockade of Iraq, the Israeli blockade of Gaza keeps out chlorine used to make water safe to drink and to treat raw sewage. The Israeli excuse is that the chlorine may also be used for weapons. But the reality is that in Iraq thousands of children died from water-borne diseases.

A number of buildings, including mosques, were spray-painted by the Israeli military with such racist hate slogans as "Hamas is dead" in Arabic and in English and "Arabs need to die," among others. Despite the slogans and despite the invasion, Hamas still governs Gaza and the Palestinian resistance continues.

One family in Gaza

Jehad Abu-Jakar, a student at the University of Gaza studying English, told us how hard it was to study in Gaza. The university lacks books, school supplies, and vehicles and fuel for transportation. Recently he moved from his home on the Rafah border, only 300 yards from the Egyptian checkpoint where the convoy entered Gaza, to Gaza City so he can continue his studies.

Abu-Jakar explained how the Israelis forced his family out of Bir al-Saba (Be'ersheba) and how they came to the Gaza Strip as refugees, where they had hoped to build a better life. His childhood

on the border during the first Intifada was very difficult.

During the second Intifada the Israelis killed Abu-Jakar's aunt and injured his mother. At that time he joined with other youth and threw stones at the Israeli forces. His story of the human devastation and suffering of one family reflects the conditions for many Palestinian families who live on the Gaza Strip, where invasions, destruction and brutality have continued for more than 60 years.

The people of Gaza are continuing their struggle and resistance against the months-long blockade and Israeli incursions and attacks.

Health care in Gaza

Gaza health services were on the brink of collapse before the Dec. 27 Israeli invasion. Medical supplies were almost nonexistent, and patients with complex medical conditions were being referred to hospitals outside Gaza.

Aed Yohi, a representative of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society, said at a press conference that Gaza has a total of 2,053 hospital beds.

The invasion killed 1,413 Palestinians, including 313 children, while nine Israelis died. About a quarter of the casualties occurred by Dec. 30. At that time only 15 medical patients were allowed to pass through the Rafah border into Egypt for emergency care, according to the World Health Organization.

An article on the Web site Mideastcurrent.com from that time illustrates how the blockade affected medical care during the invasion. At Al Shifa' hospital on Dec. 30, Khaled Abu-Najar, a staff nurse in the emergency department, said that "150 patients were brought in at once ... [but] we lacked beds, sterile gloves, gauze, sheets and scissors to treat patients."

At the same hospital, Ramez Zyam, one of the general surgeons who was working 24-hour shifts, said the surgeons treating many crush injuries and severe trauma lacked instruments like artery clamps, chest tubes and forceps needed to handle severe traumatic injuries. They had not received medical supplies for three months. According to the director of the hospital, Hussein Ashur, the burn, intensive care, orthopedic, and surgery units reached capacity.

The Kamal Adwan Hospital serves Jabalya and Beit Lahlya. Jabalya is Gaza's largest refugee camp and 300,000 people

reside there. This hospital has only 71 beds. The first day of the invasion they received 93 patients for emergency care. This hospital lacked supplies, ambulances and staff. But they expanded makeshift beds and continued to care for the wounded.

The struggle continues

The need for medical supplies continues even without a war emergency. Our convoy brought a number of truckloads of medical supplies with us from the U.S., including walkers, wheelchairs, crutches and other disability-assistance equipment to help the people wounded during the invasion. The convoy bought medicine and other medical supplies like intensive care monitors brought from the U.S. and materials bought in Egypt. Much of it was aimed at aiding people who had lost limbs.

Our other goal was to bring in vehicles. Unfortunately, the Egyptian government impounded all the vehicles. The Viva Palestina convoy is exploring how to overcome this problem.

The last task for convoy members is to spread the word about Gaza with pictures, videos, newspaper articles, and presentations to groups around the United States to win more support for the Palestinian struggle on the Gaza Strip—heroic resistance against Israel and U.S. imperialism.

The 218 participants in Viva Palestina-U.S. will be taking on that task. This includes representatives from The Council on American Islamic Relations, Middle East Children's Alliance, Cuba Coalition, Al Awda—the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, American Muslims for Palestine, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Azalan (MEChA), American Jewish Rabbis against Zionism, International Action Center, Answer Coalition, International Socialist Organization and Workers World Party.

The Palestinian people showed us their deep roots in their land and their determination to continue resistance until all Palestinians have the right to return to their homeland.

Eolis, a retired emergency room nurse who describes herself as an anti-racist, anti-Zionist Jewish woman who has shown solidarity with the Palestinian people since the June 1967 war, helped organize the manifest list of supplies brought from the U.S.



Professor Gates is right

Racial profiling is another expression of institutionalized racism rooted in a white supremacist ideology under capitalism. In the U.S., racial profiling has tragically become a way of life, like eating, sleeping and breathing. Being targeted based on the color of your skin or your nationality is a terrible burden to bear for any person of color, whether you live in the inner city, barrio, a reservation or in an upper-middle-class suburb.

In a 2004 report entitled “Threat and Humiliation: Racial Profiling, Domestic Security, and Human Rights in the United States,” Amnesty International documented that in a year-long investigation, an estimated 32 million people (the equivalent of the entire population of Canada at the time) had been racially profiled—the vast majority of them from nationally oppressed groups. (www.amnestyusa.org) One can only imagine how much these numbers have increased over the last five years, not only for those born in the U.S. but also for immigrants.

The police have been, by far, the most feared perpetrators of racial profiling, and understandably so. Police harassment and brutality is so epidemic that pamphlets have been written by activists and progressive lawyers on how one should behave if ever stopped by the police to help avoid arrest, physical assault or even losing one’s life.

This is the broader context in which to understand the July 16 arrest of one of the most respected Black scholars, Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., who teaches at Harvard University. Gates was arrested by a Cambridge police officer after showing two forms of identification as he, along with a Black limo driver, were trying to unjam the lock to the front door of Gates’ house in a predominantly white, upscale neighborhood known as “Harvard Square.”

This incident may have gone unreported, like the millions of other racial profiling cases, if it weren’t for two facts: first, because of Gates’ recognition as one of the most influential African Americans; and, second and most important, because he didn’t back

down from the cop. In fact, he challenged the authority of the white officer, who eventually arrested him. In his own style, Gates, who is slightly built and walks with a cane, resisted being racially profiled by an entire police department that has a reputation for its brutality.

Gates was arrested, not because he committed any crime, but because he made a courageous stand against racism when the relationship of forces was not in his favor. Just think of what would have happened if Gates had taken a similar stand in the segregated South. He surely would have been lynched. Black people were strongly encouraged to “stay in their place,” meaning to be submissive and keep their eyes to the ground when interacting with any white person, especially the police.

Black people have been lynched in the South for any excuse; a glaring example is the 1955 lynching of 14 year-old Emmett Till in Money, Miss., for supposedly whistling at a white woman.

The Cambridge police report stated that Gates was arrested for disorderly conduct due to “exhibiting loud and tumultuous behavior.” In other words, Gates refused to bow down before the repressive state.

The fact that the Cambridge police demanded that President Obama apologize to them for publicly calling their actions “stupid” proves once again that the election of the first Black president has not signaled the end of racism and national oppression, nor does it reflect a “post-racial society”; far from it.

While the police, the mainstream media and the bourgeois pundits want to isolate and downplay every instance of racial profiling, Gates’ resistance has helped to generalize the issue on national and international levels. No matter how this particular development plays out, activists must seize this opportunity to show the need to build a movement based on anti-racist, class-wide solidarity—as workers of all nationalities are losing their jobs, homes, health care and pensions in rapid numbers; and as the economic crisis becomes even more acute. □

Haitian people march against the U.S.

By G. Dunkel

According to AHP, the official Haitian press agency, at least 10,000 people marched in Port-au-Prince July 15 to demand the return of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide on his birthday. Aristide has been in forced exile since the coup, mostly living in South Africa.

The march started at Tabarre, Aristide’s house in the north of Port-au-Prince, still in ruins from the 2004 coup. The house was decorated with pictures and flowers for the occasion.

The densely packed march grew much larger as it drew close to Constitution Square on the Champ de Mars near the Presidential Palace.

All the groups connected to Aristide’s Lavalas Movement united in this birthday present to demand: “Long live the return of President Aristide!”; “Down with the MINUSTAH [UN Mission to Stabilize Haiti, the military occupation force!]”; “Release all political prisoners!”; “Reinstate all fired state employees!”; and “Down with the neoliberal plan!”

The neoliberal plan for Haiti involves creating a “safe, secure” environment for wealthy tourists and creating tens of thousands of very low paid textile, subcontracting jobs.

Speaking at the concluding rally, Dr. Maryse Narcisse, a member of the Fanmi Lavalas Executive Committee, declared, “Our political organization will defeat all those who are working for its demise.”

Narcisse criticized Haiti’s current president, René Préval, for trying to amend Haiti’s 1987 Constitution while violating it at the same time. “Lavalas remains true to its dream of a better Haiti, where all citizens can have access to education, health, housing and employment,” she concluded. “Realization of this dream goes hand in hand with the return of President Aristide to Haiti.”

Préval won the election with votes from Lavalas and its supporters who believed he supported the return of Aristide. He has not only kept Aristide in exile but kept Fanmi Lavalas off the ballot in the recent senate elections. This is how the Haitian bourgeoisie has kept Aristide and his party from winning elections.

Ansyto Félix, a member of Fanmi Lavalas’ mobilization committee, claimed that the success of this demonstration, held on a work day, indicates the majority of the Haitian people support the Lavalas Move-

ment and are united around the return of its leader.

Building on the strength of this demonstration, according to July 22-28 Haïti-Liberté, Fanmi Lavalas and elements of the student movement have called for a major demonstration July 28 with a broad set of demands, including MINUSTAH’s departure and the return of Aristide; instituting the minimum wage of \$5.05 a day, which has been passed by parliament but suspended by the Préval government; reforming the state university; and justice for the man shot dead by MINUSTAH at the Port-au-Prince cathedral.

July 28 is the 94th anniversary of the first U.S. invasion of Haiti in 1915. Mary A. Renda, author of “Taking Haiti,” describes the tasks facing the U.S. in 1915: “In this case, those tasks were to bring about political stability in Haiti, to secure U.S. control over Haiti with regard to U.S. strategic interests ... and to integrate Haiti more effectively into the international capitalist economy.” (University of North Carolina Press, 2000)

On Feb. 29, 2004, the U.S. had to confront the massive support the poor people of Haiti—80 percent of Haitians live on less than \$2 a day—gave to President Aristide, someone whom they had elected twice because they felt he represented their interests.

The U.S. and its imperialist partners France and Canada wanted to preserve Haiti as a major market for their food exports and a major source of cheap labor. Haiti is the third largest market for U.S. rice. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, while visiting Haiti in April, pushed for creating 100,000 garment jobs. Having a convenient source of low-wage garment workers, especially since labor in China is becoming more expensive, suits U.S. corporate interests.

A small country, Haiti shocked the world in 1804 when it became the second independent country in the Western Hemisphere. It shocked the U.S. in December 1990 when a mass movement of Haitian people elected Jean Bertrand Aristide as its president over a candidate financially and politically backed by the U.S.

The U.S. has real economic interests in Haiti that it wants to maintain. But politically it is precisely because Haiti is impoverished and weak that the U.S. can’t let it escape its clutches. That would set a very bad example. □

Celebration of Moncada

Continued from page 6

there. Both successfully defied the continued U.S. ban on travel to Cuba, bringing hundreds of tons of material aid, as well as their strong arms and warm hearts, ready to do everything in their power to support the revolution. “We have a right to travel to Cuba,” declared emcee Frank Maldonado to thunderous applause, “and we’re willing to defend it!”

Larry Hamm, a leader of the Newark-based People’s Organization for Progress, said that 40 years ago he declared his unwavering solidarity with the Cuban Revolution and renewed that commitment today. POP has led an impressive series of grassroots struggles not only in Newark but throughout northern New Jersey.

A beautiful book by Che Guevara was available on the Cuba Solidarity Network table: “The African Dream: The Diaries of the Revolutionary War in the Congo.” Che was famous for his slogan that “two, three, many Vietnams” would be the best way to

defeat imperialism. In the early 1960s Che and Fidel launched the Organization for Solidarity with the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, widely known as the Tricontinental, to further these efforts. It continues today. (See www.ospaall.com.)

There were also biographies of both Che and Fidel—indisputably the most respected and revered personalities in Latin America and in many other parts of the world for their exemplary leadership and fearless, effective defiance of the U.S.’s once-overwhelmingly powerful (and now tottering) empire.

A new book by Leslie Feinberg, “Rainbow Solidarity in Defense of Cuba,” was available at the Workers World table. The book details the many accomplishments of the Cuban leadership and society as a whole to overcome centuries of oppression of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The book is now available at bookstores across the U.S. or at Leftbooks.com. □

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– Clarence Thomas, *ILWU Local 10 and Co-chair, Million Worker March Movement*

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A new attack

G20 countries practice ‘agricolonialism’ in developing countries

By Betsey Piette

Collectively the countries which participate in the Group of Twenty comprise 85 percent of the global gross national product, 80 percent of world trade and two-thirds of the world’s population. What many G-20 countries lack, however, is sufficient arable land to meet the needs of growing urban populations.

In recent years, many G-20 nations have engaged in agricolonialism, taking over arable land in developing countries.

One billion people worldwide face starvation, according to United Nations reports. The global recession is expected to drive 103 million more into hunger.

However, the land grabs, concentrated in Africa, Asia and Latin America where hundreds of millions lack sufficient food, are intended to grow food and biofuel crops for export, not for use by at-risk populations.

While the U.S., Britain and European Union nations have a long history of colonial control over land in developing countries, other G-20 countries, including China, south Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia, have recently bought up global farmland.

After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, even Russia and other former Soviet states became targets of land grabs.

Global “AgInvesting”

Last year, as the global economic crisis deepened, food “riots” destabilized many countries. In December, spiking grain prices that had led to food shortages fell by 50 percent. Today, grain prices remain above their 20-year average, and global food stocks continue at 40-year lows.

Over the next 40 years the world’s population is projected to grow from 6 billion to 9 billion, doubling demand, while arable land and water become scarcer. As a result, the cost of farmland keeps rising.

Food now rivals oil as a basis of power and economic security. Arable land has become the latest target for international investors, with more than 90 funds invested directly in farmland.

With the current credit crunch, large companies are investing in farmland as a means of control over future food supplies when food security could become a major concern.

In June a Global AgInvesting 2009 Conference, held in New York, aimed at investors eager for opportunities to invest in agricultural lands, commodities and infrastructure. It brought together top players from the global agricultural and investing industries, including Soyatech, Altima Partners, Bayer CropScience, Brazil AgroLogic, DuPont, Rabobank and the World Bank. The participating firms own and/or manage over 11 million acres of productive farmland worldwide.

The International Food Policy Research Institute reports that 37 million to 49 million acres of land in poor countries, valued at \$20 to \$30 billion, were sold or under negotiation for sale to foreign buyers since 2006.

Foreign investments in agriculture are not new, but today they are more strategic than commercial, with many transactions intended to insulate the foreign investor’s home country from future global food and energy crises.

Another significant difference is the scale of these purchases. A “big land deal”

used to be 240,000 acres. Now the largest ones are many times that size.

The investment firm Blackrock has set up a \$200 million hedge fund to invest in land. Dow Chemical has invested its pension funds in farmland futures. Morgan Stanley bought nearly 100,000 acres of Brazilian farmland.

Multibillionaire George Soros is getting into the global land-buying business. Jim Rogers Jr., Soros’ partner at the Quantum Fund, is involved with two farmland investment funds—Agrifirm and Agcaptia Farmland Investment Partnership. “I’m convinced that farmland is going to be one of the best investments of our time,” Rogers told ContrarianProfits. (July 27)

Land in Africa targeted

Africa imports 25 percent of its food, and the continent has become a prime target of land grabbers. Although sub-Saharan Africa is rich in minerals and natural resources, more than 450 million people live there on less than \$2 a day. More than one-third of the population suffers from malnutrition.

A recent Food and Agricultural Organization study of five African countries found that 6.2 million acres of farmland valued at \$920 million were bought or leased by foreign investors since 2004.

Most of the nearly 1 million acres taken over in Ghana were for biofuel production. Philippe Heilberg, chairman of New York-based Jarch Capital, controls nearly 2 million acres of land in south Sudan.

Saudi Arabian investors spent \$100 million to raise grain on land leased to them by the Ethiopian government; the entire crop is for export back to Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, millions of Ethiopians face hunger and malnutrition and require emergency food assistance.

A proposed 99-year land lease deal with the south Korean company Daewoo would have included nearly half of Madagascar’s arable land, with almost no benefits to the host country. Public protest over this deal contributed to the overthrow of President Marc Ravalomanana earlier this year.

Genetically modified sugar cane in Latin America

Since 1994, U.S. farm policies through the so-called “North American Free Trade Agreement” have devastated farmers who produced corn throughout Mexico. NAFTA opened Mexican markets to corn imports from the U.S. and to the introduction of genetically modified seeds.

Now other countries are getting into the act. A French investment firm is buying up cattle ranches in Argentina and Uruguay to convert the acreage to the production of barley, corn and soy.

Within a 10-year span, nearly the entire Argentine pampas and large areas of forest and farmland in Brazil, Bolivia, Uruguay and Paraguay have been converted to produce soy as a solo crop. Agribusiness giants Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, and Bunge made billions selling chemical fertilizers, while Monsanto and Syngenta raked in record profits from modified seeds and chemical pesticides.

Corporations that led the boom in soy production in Latin America are now aggressively moving into genetically

modified sugar cane production. GM and Monsanto have been working on “Round-up Ready” sugar cane and sugar beets. Production of genetically modified sugar cane crops would devastate cane growers in Colombia, where panela, a sugar cane byproduct, is a source of nutrition.

Protests erupt in Southeast Asia

Many of the anti-agricolonialism protests have taken place in Asia. The 15-million-member Asian Peasant Coalition recently began a five-month Asia-wide Peasants’ Caravan for Land and Livelihood. The group is acting against global land grabbing in 10 Asian countries, including Sri Lanka, Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. In India and Thailand, the theme is “Stop Global Land Grabbing! Struggle for Genuine Agrarian Reform and Peoples’ Food Sovereignty.”

An estimated 365 million people in Asia make their living off the land. Globalization has increasingly integrated Asian countries into the global market and intensified landlessness among Asian peasants. In Pakistan and the Philippines, almost 75 percent of peasants are now landless.

In the Philippines, Fil-Japan is using 1.49 million acres of land for biofuel production. South Korea has leased 232,000 acres of farmland for 25 years to grow 10,000 tons of corn annually. Protests halted plans to allow China to use 3 million acres of farmland.

Wagar Ahmad Khan, the Pakistani federal minister for investment, assures legal cover and tax breaks for investors and says his government “has decided to raise a special security force, which will help create an investment-friendly atmosphere.” (IslamOnline.net, April 21)

Impact on Indigenous populations

Since the 1970s, more than half of the farmland expansion has come at the expense of natural forests, including large tracts of land in Brazil’s Amazon region. While biofuels are promoted as a means to reduce climate change, expanding cropland for biofuel production has devastated rainforests and savannas.

Conversion of natural ecosystems for production of corn and sugar cane for

ethanol, and soy and palm oil for biodiesel, causes substantial greenhouse gas emissions since these crops absorb far less carbon dioxide than the forests and wetlands they replace.

Monsanto, DuPont, Archer Daniels Midland, Deere & Co. and the Renewable Fuels Association have formed the Alliance for Abundant Food and Energy, which spends billions of dollars to lobby U.S. lawmakers to support subsidies for biofuel production and to promote genetically modified crops.

The social consequences of these land grabs are significant. Indigenous groups who have lived off the land for generations are being driven off their lands. Even when local peasant farmers are able to retain the land, larger land tracts draw off most of the water supply.

G-8 code of conduct

Faced with growing pressure from developing countries, the recent G-8 Summit issued a code of conduct in international agricultural investments that reflects the debate over foreign land purchases in poor countries. It is not clear, however, how the code might work.

“The G-8 statement is pretty weak,” said Sarah Gillam of ActionAid, an anti-poverty group which is calling for an independent U.N. commission to establish an enforceable code of conduct for foreign land purchases. It would include adequate compensation for affected communities and an assessment of the impact on local food security and rural livelihoods.

Devlin Kuyek of GRAIN, an international nonprofit organization that supports struggles for community-controlled, biodiversity-based food systems, compared the danger of land investments to the subprime mortgage crisis. “It’s not just that they want to produce food. It’s that they want to produce it in a way that makes profit. ... Nothing is being done to address speculation or the amount of profits taken by the corporations in control of the food system.

“Land is fundamental to life particularly in many countries of the South,” stated Kuyek. “Governments are playing with fire, and better watch out what they are doing.” (See www.farmlandgrab.org.)□

MUNDO OBRERO

Líderes de la resistencia hondureña

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MO: ¿En qué manera podemos ayudar al pueblo hondureño desde los Estados Unidos?

BC: (Sobre la petición escrita por Ramsey Clark del Centro de Acción Internacional) Es buena. Hay que seguir haciendo, porque el embajador USA en Honduras tenía conocimiento y el beneplácito para esto. El involucramiento del Pentágono, de los halcones de USA, de la ultra derecha, de los grupos ultraderechistas de los contrarrevolucionarios cubanos, todos están involucrados en el golpe.

Incluso los asesores de Micheletti están todavía aquí. Y la presencia de Otto Reich una noche antes del golpe en la base de la Fuerza Aérea bajo una operación de seguridad. Esto es muy delicado y mues-

tra el involucramiento de esos sectores en el golpe contrario a lo que el Presidente Obama ha dicho. Y hemos visto cómo estos golpistas han demostrado racismo contra el Presidente Obama.

Es importantísimo seguir demandando que USA retire a su embajador, y corte toda ayuda. Sigue todavía el financiamiento de AID y de otros proyectos y por eso el gobierno golpista no se preocupa. Por eso hay que seguir (las protestas) en las embajadas, seguir demandando sanciones económicas, EEUU también está obligada a participar de esas sanciones y resoluciones de la OEA y de la ONU y ya que tiene un vecino cerca, demandar que el gobierno canadiense deje de apoyar a los golpistas porque ha dicho que ellos sí pueden tener unas relaciones bilaterales con los golpistas.□

Líderes de la resistencia hondureña prometen continuar la lucha contra el golpe militar

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

20 de julio—El lado publicado sobre los eventos en Honduras es el de la supuesta “mediación de paz” en Costa Rica, la cual teóricamente está buscando una resolución pacífica al violento y criminal golpe militar que destituyó al Presidente constitucional Mel Zelaya el 28 de junio.

El otro lado, ignorado por la prensa capitalista, es el creciente y vibrante poder del pueblo hondureño, trabajadores/as y campesinos/as, quienes han estado llevando a cabo una resistencia heroica contra el golpe. Líderes de la resistencia hablan de ese sector con Workers World/Mundo Obrero (MO).

Ha sido asombroso ver el levantamiento popular, su fusión y coordinación durante los primeros 23 días desde el golpe. Sindicatos, jóvenes, mujeres, campesinos/as, indígenas y afrodescendientes, todos/as se han unido en el Frente Nacional Popular de Resistencia contra el Golpe de Estado, (FNPRG).

En una conversación telefónica el 19 de julio, Juan Barahona de la Federación Unitaria de Trabajadores de Honduras (FUTH), le dijo a WW/MO que los/as representantes de la FNPRG de todas las regiones del país se habían reunido en Tegucigalpa y decidieron continuar la resistencia independientemente de si en Costa Rica se llega o no a un acuerdo. El dijo que la movilización continuará el 20 de julio a las 8 a.m. frente al Congreso Nacional.

La Secretaria de Estado (Canciller) de Estados Unidos, Hillary Clinton está promoviendo la mediación en Costa Rica como una táctica dilatoria. Para la mediación, Clinton reclutó al Presidente de Costa Rica Oscar Arias, quien ganó el Premio Nobel de la Paz en 1987 por su mediación en Centroamérica en ese entonces. El mostró ser un negociante muy efectivo para salvaguardar los intereses de Estados Unidos durante la década de los años ochenta en contra de la Revolución Sandinista de Nicaragua, y ahora será de nuevo usado en contra de otro pueblo de Centroamérica, el hondureño.

El golpista Roberto Micheletti llegó a la primera negociación en Costa Rica con seis, en vez de los acordados cuatro asesores. Dos de ellos eran de Estados Unidos, ambos con cercana asociación a los Clinton: Bennet Ratcliff, de una firma de abogados en San Diego y Lanny J. Davis, “quien ha sido el abogado personal del Presidente Clinton e hizo campaña presidencial de la Señora Clinton”. (New York Times, 13 de julio)

Peligro de renovada agresión estadounidense contra América Latina

Muchos analistas, especialmente en Latinoamérica, consideran que el golpe contra el pueblo hondureño, que sólo pudo ser planeado y llevado a cabo con el apoyo de poderosas fuerzas en Estados Unidos, es sólo el comienzo de un atentado más amplio por revertir la ola progresista en el continente. Varios acontecimientos simultáneos llevan a esa conclusión.

Mientras Ecuador despide la base estadounidense en Manta y se une, como su octava nación miembro, a la Alianza Bolivariana de las Américas (ALBA) iniciada por Venezuela, un sospechoso y falso video

aparece en Colombia. El video insinúa que las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) ayudaron a financiar la campaña presidencial del Presidente ecuatoriano Rafael Correa. Esta es obviamente una maniobra dirigida para acusar luego al gobierno ecuatoriano de “terrorismo”.

Además está el reporte más reciente de la Oficina de Contabilización Gubernamental. Como brazo investigador del Congreso de Estados Unidos, la GAO (siglas in inglés), denunció una supuesta y creciente penetración del tráfico de drogas en Venezuela, nación que clasifica como “narco estado”, y alega que Venezuela es uno de los “centros más importantes para la transportación de cocaína en vía a países como España y Estados Unidos, siendo Honduras frecuentemente usado como puente aéreo”. (vheadline.com, 19 de julio)

Además existe ahora un nuevo peligro que amenaza a toda la región: Estados Unidos anunció el establecimiento de cinco bases militares más en Colombia.

Honduras puede ser un punto crucial. En las negociaciones en Costa Rica, Arias presentó siete puntos a las dos partes. El primero era la restitución de Zelaya a la presidencia. Los seis puntos restantes eran concesiones a los líderes golpistas: la constitución de un “gobierno de reconciliación” que incluya a los aliados de Micheletti, una amnistía general, que Zelaya desista de convocar una asamblea constituyente, adelantar las elecciones generales, la transferencia del control de las fuerzas armadas del Ejecutivo al Tribunal Electoral y el establecimiento de una comisión que supervise la implementación de estos acuerdos.

Sin embargo, Zelaya aceptó públicamente la propuesta mientras que Micheletti la rechazó.

Desde el punto de vista de Washington, mientras más tarde le tome a Zelaya regresar, más fácil será para el gobierno de facto de Roberto Micheletti mantenerse en su administración ilegal. Washington cuenta con el eventual cansancio de la resistencia después de semanas de movilizaciones.

Una voz de la resistencia hondureña: Berta Cáceres

Pero la arrogancia imperialista generalmente subestima el poder de los pueblos. Honduras, que durante décadas ha sido una base militar de EEUU en Centroamérica, su oligarquía muy estrechamente vinculada a los imperialistas, ha tenido hasta ahora pocas oportunidades para mostrar sus movimientos populares.

Esta vez es diferente. WW/MO habló extensamente con Berta Cáceres del Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (COPINH) el 20 de julio. Su organización fue fundada en 1993 para luchar por los derechos de los pueblos negros e indígenas, en particular de la nación Lenca en el suroeste del país.

MO: ¿Cómo se ha integrado COPINH a la lucha en este proceso?

BC: El COPINH hace tiempo viene demandando un proceso de participación, de consulta plena, consciente, informada, pertinente a los pueblos indígenas y negros. Tenemos un posicionamiento político claro de lucha antiimperialista, anti neoliberal; también ha luchado por

construcción de espacios de democracia participativa directa.

Y es en ese sentido que nosotros respaldamos las iniciativas del Presidente Zelaya e incluso meses antes del golpe, COPINH denunció la amenaza que representaban los sectores de poder y la posibilidad de hacer un golpe de estado contra el Presidente Zelaya.

También sabemos que lo que ha ocurrido en Honduras trasciende a intereses particulares, sino que es de interés nacional, e incluso internacional y que este hecho es un mal precedente para la historia de nuestro continente y sus procesos de liberación y emancipación. Que puede ser el inicio de una escalonada represiva golpista estilo siglo 21 de parte de los sectores de derecha y ultraconservadores oligarcas del continente contra todos los procesos que liberan nuestros pueblos por construir un mundo más justo y más humano.

Entonces, COPINH como organización beligerante de lucha, se ha incorporado plenamente a la resistencia.[Como resultado] hemos soportado la agresión de los sectores represivos y [somos] también una organización perseguida ya que hemos tenido hasta que desmontar nuestras radios comunitarias indígenas, hemos sido vigilados, perseguidos y también intervenidas nuestras comunicaciones.

Hemos visto no sólo cómo el fascismo puro ha salido, sino que también una combinación del capitalismo destructor y racista y patriarcal con una clara posición fundamentalista agresora. Entonces como pueblo estamos más que llamados a participar junto al resto de la diversidad del pueblo hondureño en esta lucha heroica que libra.

MO: ¿Cuál es el papel de la mujer?

BC: Ha sido fundamental, decisivo. Si miramos desde las tomas de puentes hasta las multitudinarias marchas, yo diría que la mayoría son mujeres, de todas las edades. Las mujeres también estamos en la conducción del FNPRG tomando decisiones, participando, porque creemos que somos protagonistas, actrices decisivas en la historia de nuestro país.... Estamos aportando con nuestra creatividad, con mucho ingenio del pueblo y de las mujeres en cada una de estas actividades.

MO: ¿Qué piensa usted de las negociaciones del Presidente [de Costa Rica] Arias?

BC: Para nosotros, ya eso es un fracaso. Creemos que el último plazo de las 72 horas nos parece que ya es búsqueda desesperada, de una solución en ese espacio de mediación que no es negociación. Hemos dicho que aceptamos el 1er punto que es la restitución del Presidente Zelaya y hemos manifestado que hemos rechazado el resto de los puntos porque no coinciden con el posicionamiento del Frente ni del pueblo hondureño.

El resto de los puntos significaría impunidad para los golpistas que han asesinado, reprimido al pueblo hondureño y nos han hecho retroceder más de 30 años en nuestras conquistas. Hemos exigido una revisión de las FFAA, su función y el papel que desempeñó en el golpe de estado.

Exigimos que también se establezcan puntos sobre el tema de los DDHH en Honduras porque ha habido violaciones masivas e individuales que nosotros estamos denunciando. Entonces, en ese senti-

do, pedimos a la OEA y la ONU que pasen a operativizar y concretizar esas resoluciones y sanciones aquí en lo interno de nuestro país y a todos los gobiernos, a arrear las sanciones económicas, especialmente contra el gobierno de facto.

MO: ¿Cuáles son los planes para la semana del 20 a 26 de julio?

BC: Hay muchas actividades. Ahorita se está dando una asamblea de las centrales obreras para definir acciones y paros en instancias gubernamentales y privadas, tomas de carreteras, jornadas de arte y de cultura de resistencia contra el golpe, acciones comunitarias, departamentales, regionales, que se van a profundizar el día jueves y viernes. Y a la espera de que regrese el compañero Presidente Zelaya.

MO: Hoy escuché que después de estar cerradas desde el comienzo de la huelga, 50 por ciento de las escuelas se abrirán.

BC: Sí. Es un acuerdo entre los colegios magisteriales, son seis en Honduras, son muy fuertes a nivel nacional, y esto lo hicieron para tener jornadas de concientización de los padres y madres de familia ya que hay una enorme campaña de manipulación y de acoso contra el cuerpo organizado magisterial, para hacer un reacomodo y poder incorporarse y participar en todas las acciones del jueves y viernes.

Porque no hay forma de informar al pueblo de la verdad por el toque de queda, violación a la libre expresión y no podemos usar los medios para informar al pueblo de la verdad. Lo único que tenemos es una radio y un canal, eso es todo, y algunos medios alternativos clandestinos que el pueblo está usando.

MO: Han sido tres semanas de movilizaciones continuas. ¿Cómo ha sobrevivido el movimiento?

BC: Ha habido relevos, concentraciones en regiones, para impulsarla en momentos más importantes y cruciales. Ha surgido la creatividad de los jóvenes, muy poderosa, más que discursos, a través de teatro, música. Acciones para articularse en cada región.

Hay acciones fuera de Tegucigalpa que son muy diversas, muy contundentes. Por ejemplo, hay tomas de carreteras que se mantienen en Colón que se impide el paso de la producción de la Standard Oil, y de la producción del aceite de palma africana de Miguel Facusé, uno de los mayores golpistas financiadores de este país. Uno de los hombres más ricos de Centroamérica.

MO: ¿Qué opina usted que vaya a pasar con el ALBA?

BC: El ALBA para nosotros es un proyecto alternativo, popular, construido no sólo por Mel Zelaya sino por el pueblo hondureño. El ALBA beneficia a todos en los rincones más pobres de este país, a los sectores más desposeídos, por ejemplo a los pueblos indígenas y negros Por eso nosotros desde antes luchamos y demandamos que Honduras fuera firmante del ALBA.

Todo el movimiento ha sido partícipe del proceso de construcción del ALBA Honduras y lo vamos a seguir defendiendo porque no vamos a permitir que las conquistas tengan retroceso.

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